

SOARing

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NEWS FROM THE SOAR INSTITUTE

SOARING ISSUE 6

A Two Year Review

In July 2011, the SOAR Institute was established. The first phase of SOAR was to oversee the tutoring services of the College. During that first term, SOAR tutoring included twenty tutors tutoring in ten different subjects. Training was instituted for tutors based on the principles of the Association for Tutoring Professionals and the tutoring standards of the College Reading and Learning Association. Since that time, SOAR Tutoring Services has expanded to include more than thirty-five tutors. SOAR tutors represent a diverse group with currently enrolled Shelton students, graduate students from the University of Alabama, adjunct instructors, retired educators, and other professionals who enjoy tutoring. More than 16,700 tutor sessions have been held in SOAR in the past two years.

Smarthinking is an online tutoring service provided by the College for students. This program allows students to access assistance 24 hours a day, seven days a week and provides tutors for subjects not available in SOAR. Additional services offered through SOAR Tutoring Services began with "Student Success Seminars" which cover numerous topics such as time management, test anxiety, and note-taking skills. "Technology Basics" is another service that began in the Fall of 2011 and offers assistance to students who have trouble using school-related technology. In July 2013, SOAR Tutoring Services (STS) received international certification for its tutoring component. This credential verifies that STS is meeting international standards for training its tutors, tracking students who attend tutoring, and offering services complementing tutoring. Most recently, STS expanded to include "COMPASS Help Sessions" for students re-testing a section of the placement assessment or students taking it for the first time. Initial results of students who test after attending a help session have been encouraging. The newest service offered via tutoring services includes "College Knowledge" information sessions. These two hour meetings are designed to educate freshmen students about Shelton State, and prepare students for some of the major differences between college and high school. This information was recently incorporated into the Orientation to College course. The long term plan is for these information sessions to be shared with high school students in our service area as part of the College's recruiting services.

The second phase of SOAR was the addition of three navigators who began in the fall term of 2011. These specially trained advisors work with students who place into two or more developmental courses. Navigators use intrusive advising techniques to hold students accountable for their education. Navigators meet with students on a regular basis, ask students to have progress reports completed monthly, and communicate with their students' instructors. To assist in advising students, navigators gather important information such as obligations of students outside of class time. Examples include the number of hours worked by students and other familial duties. Navigators also discuss student characteristics and tendencies and how they affect success in college. *(See Review on page 2.)*

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SHELTON STATE
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

STUDENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACHIEVEMENT AND RESOURCES

The mission of the SOAR Institute of Shelton State Community College is to provide dedicated support to enhance the success of underprepared students.



Congratulations!

Veronica Cross recently earned international certification as an administrative professional from IAAP, the International Association of Administrative Professionals. The process included a 400 question test covering communication, organization and planning, information distribution, records management, physical and information resources, document production, financial functions, and human resources. The international exams are given twice a year. According to the Chief Executive Officer of IAAP, the certification “is for career-minded individuals who want to professionally demonstrate to themselves and their employers that they are committed to the profession.” The certification recognizes those who are the best in the administrative professional businesses. Since 1942, IAAP has set the standard for administrative professionals throughout the world. The Certified Administrative Professional, or CAP, designation was established in 1951.

Veronica is one of only three people in Tuscaloosa with the Certified Administrative Professional designation. The state of Alabama has ninety-five people with this designation. Once certified, administrative professionals must recertify every five years. This process keeps individuals on the cutting edge of new technologies and office procedures. CAP holders attend conferences to continue learning skills applicable to the job.



Review (continued from page 1)

Since the inception of SOAR, navigators have met with more than 1600 students. Beginning this spring, navigators are working with students testing into *one* or more developmental courses. The pass rates of students assigned to navigators is higher in most developmental courses than the pass rates of students not assigned to navigators. The retention rate of students assigned to navigators is higher than the overall retention rate of the college. The relationships established between navigators and their students appear to be having a real impact on student success.

The third phase of SOAR got underway in the summer of 2012 when mathematics instructors and the director of SOAR began an intense study of developmental math courses. The methods used in teaching these courses along with the amount of content in each course was evaluated and redesigned. Beginning in the fall of 2014, students who take developmental mathematics at Shelton State will have the option to test out of course units and progress at an accelerated pace, provided they achieve the required mastery level of 80%. Another difference in the makeup of these math classes is that rather than taking two, four-hour courses, the content has been revised to be covered in four, two-hour courses. This change will allow students the option of passing math in smaller units without having to repeat the entire, longer course previously offered. Instructors Renea Randle and Doug Robinson have lead this effort with assistance from instructors Lisa Nix and Padmal Mahawanniarachchi. Another instructional component of SOAR involves writing boot camps. Beginning in the summer of 2014, students whose COMPASS score is close to English 093 or English 101 will be eligible to attend boot camps including an intense review of writing skills. English instructors, Shurrun Varner and Mindy Young, in collaboration with the Director of SOAR, have spearheaded this new opportunity for students.

The SOAR Institute has had more than 56,900 student visits in its first two years of operation. These visits are for services other than tutoring or seeing a navigator. Computer access and printing are the two most prevalent reasons for these visits. Students are coming to SOAR to use the resources provided by the College.

A Two Year Review